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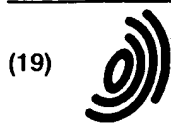
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Remarks:

A request for correction the description and claim 9 has been filed pursuant to Rule 88 EPC. A decision on the request will be taken during the proceedings before the Examining Division (Guidelines for Examination in the EPO, A-V, 3.).

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(54) Wide base perpendicular hook karabiner

(57) Quick-locking safety karabiner comprising a shaped body (3) having an arcuate striker portion (5) defining a hollow conformation of attachment (5a) for an elongated support element. The conformation of attachment (5a) is accessed by way of an opening of the body (3) adjacent the arcuate portion (5) and in correspondence with which there is a closing element (15) that can

oscillate in the general plane of the arcuate portion (5). The body (3) defines a support base that is substantially flat and transversal to the general plane of the arcuate portion (5), so that in the position in which the karabiner (1) rests with its base on a surface, the arcuate portion extends perpendicularly from that surface.

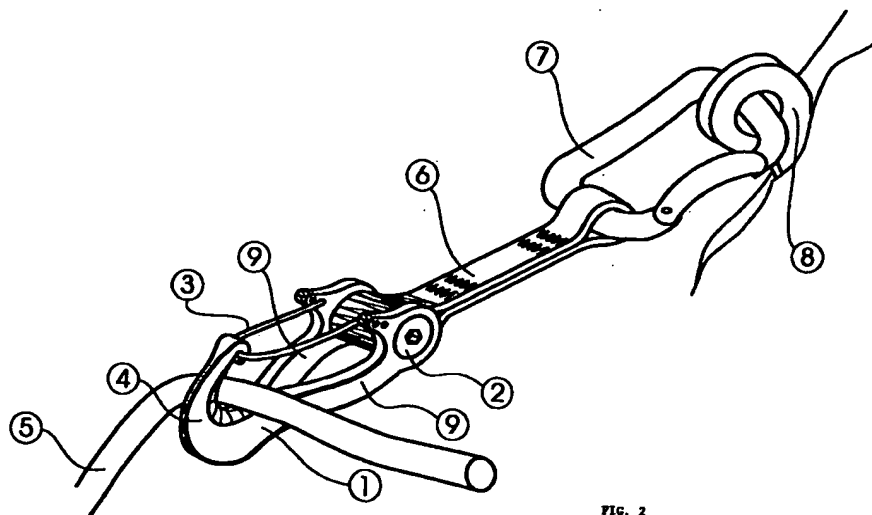


FIG. 2

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to auxiliary equipment used for personal safety and, in particular, for sports climbing.

[0002] More specifically, the invention relates to a quick-locking safety karabiner comprising a shaped body having an arcuate striker portion which defines a hollow conformation by which the karabiner can be attached to an elongated support element such as a rope or a loop element, the hollow attachment conformation being accessible via an opening in the body adjacent the arcuate part and in correspondence to which there is disposed a closing element which can oscillate in the general plane of the arcuate portion between a position intercepting the opening in which it engages with the arcuate portion and an open position in which it is spaced from the arcuate portion.

[0003] Karabiners of the type defined above known at present have the main drawback of being substantially flat, so that, when they are connected by means of a rope or a tape to a fixture on a wall, e.g. ringed piton, they lie parallel to the wall because of their shape and the force of gravity. Another characteristic of the karabiner known at present is that the force generated by the spring which regulates the opening of the mobile part lies in a plane without constraints so that a climber who wants to insert his safety rope into one of these karabiners must use one hand to hold the karabiner away from the wall and hold it immobile until the rope is inserted into it by means of the other hand which must in some way press the rope onto the mobile part in order to rotate it to free the access for the rope. When it is not practically possible to operate with two hands, then one hand with great difficulty must attempt to straighten the karabiner, holding it steady with some of the fingers while using the rest of the fingers (which are holding the rope) to press the rope onto the mobile part in order to insert the rope. The operation is difficult and laborious in most cases and is often dangerous, since it is carried out when the climber is far from the previous anchor point and in the event of a fall would travel a distance equal to twice the length of the rope from the present position back to the preceding karabiner.

[0004] In order to avoid such drawbacks, the object of the present invention is a karabiner of the type described above, characterized in that the body defines a base that, in turn, defines unambiguously at least one plane of support transversal to the general plane of the arcuate portion, so that in normal use the karabiner lies naturally with the arcuate portion perpendicular to the surface on which it lies.

[0005] Due to this idea for a solution, the karabiner automatically lies in such a way the force of the spring regulating the mobile part is opposed by the reaction of the surface of support. The rope may thus be inserted into its hollow conformation of attachment by one hand alone - i.e. by the hand that controls the rope - simply by

pressing the rope onto the mobile part. The said part, being attached by a hinge whose constraining reactions are balanced by the surface of support on which it lies, must move in the only degree of freedom left to it and frees enough space for the rope to enter the karabiner. This operation can be done quickly and in relative safety.

[0006] Preferably, the closing element has a vertex part which can engage a hook extremity of the arcuate part and presents a tapered form, decreasing in width from its hinged base to its vertex.

[0007] In this way, the possibility of the closing element accidentally opening and spacing itself from engagement with the arcuate portion is removed, preventing the rope from disengaging from the karabiner in the case of a rope which is engaged in the attachment formation of the karabiner and may pass from one side of the karabiner to the other.

[0008] Further characteristics and advantages of the invention will be obvious from the detailed description which follows, which is by way of example and not limiting, in which reference is made to the attached drawings in which:

- Figure 1 is a prospective view of a karabiner according to the invention.
- Figure 2 is a prospective view of the karabiner of fig.1 connected to a restraint element and with a rope engaged in the attachment conformation.
- Figure 3 and 4 are schematic prospective views which illustrate in sequence the respective stages of the engagement of a rope in the karabiner, produced according to the present invention, in Figs 1 and 2.
- Figure 5 shows three prospective views of a karabiner according to the present invention.

[0009] With reference to the figures, a safety karabiner according to the invention which can be used in particular in climbing, is indicated in general by reference number 1. It comprises a shaped body 3 preferably produced from a single piece of light alloy, preferably high-strength aluminum such as Ergal or Avional, having an arcuate striker portion 5 which surrounds at least part of a hollow attachment conformation 5a. This arcuate portion 5 is shaped as a saddle to receive an elongated support element such as a rope C or loop element of the user e.g. a climber.

[0010] From the arcuate portion 5 there extends a forked portion 7 (or simply fork 7) which includes a pair of arms 9 arranged substantially in a U-shape. The arms 9 comprise corresponding circular seats in the extremities 9a opposite the arcuate portion 5. The function of these seats will be made clear below.

[0011] The arms 9 define a plane substantially perpendicular to the plane in which the arcuate portion 5 lies, and so define a support plane for the karabiner 1, e.g. on the surface of a rockface. In particular, the sup-

port base of the karabiner 1 is transverse to the general plane in which the arcuate portion 5 lies, so in the position where the karabiner 1 lies stable with its base on a surface, the arcuate portion 5 extends perpendicular to that surface.

[0012] From each of the extremities 9a of the arms 9 there extends a relative appendage 13 turned to the same part as the arcuate portion 5, for the articulation of a closing element 15, which closes one opening of the karabiner adjacent to the element 5 in such a way as to permit the rope C to reach the saddle-backed conformation 5a and is so shaped as to minimize the friction due to chafing of the rope C in particular conditions of use.

[0013] The element 15 is fitted in order to oscillate in the general plane of the arcuate portion 5 between a first position in which it intercepts the opening of the karabiner 1 and where a vertex part 15a of the element 15 engages a hook portion 5b of the arcuate portion 5, and an open position in which the vertex part 15a is spaced from the hook element 5b. In particular, the element 15 presents a generally tapered shape, which could be produced by metal wire e.g. steel piano wire, shaped to a V- or U-shape. The two arms of the element 15 separate slightly from the vertex part 15a to finish up approximately perpendicular to the holes 17 and 17a. At the extremity of the arms of the element 15 opposite the vertex part 15a there extend relative transverse projections each of which can engage a respective hole 17 or 17a formed in correspondence to each of the appendages 13. Such projections are riveted during assembly to prevent their escape from the respective holes 17 and 17a.

[0014] When the length of rope C disposed above the karabiner 1 is moved from one side to the other with respect to the karabiner itself, the rope C tends to bear against and bend around the element 15. In traditional karabiners the closing part consists of an element substantially parallel to the plane of opening; in such circumstances the rope wound about it tends to open the karabiner and facilitate the escape of the rope from the karabiner. Since the element 15 in the karabiner 1 presents a shape tapered toward its vertex 15a, in similar circumstances the rope C which tends to wind around the closing element is forced to slide along the tapered shape to fall into the saddle-backed conformation 5a; there is a natural tendency for the rope to return to the saddle-backed conformation 5a without imposing such force on the closing element 15 as to cause it to open. The closing element 15 remains therefore in its closed configuration and guarantees reliable operation of the karabiner 1.

[0015] Preferably in a possible solution of application, the closing element 15 is slightly asymmetrical in that the arms are of different lengths in such a way as that one of the transverse projections engages a hole 17 while the other engages a hole 17a, the holes 17 and 17a being parallel but staggered so that there is an elastic force returning the closing element 15 to its position

of intercepting the opening of the karabiner 1. In another possible solution of application the closing element 15 is wound around the pin 20 and engages the holes 17a symmetrically.

5 [0016] The circular seats 10 of the extremities 9a of the arms 9 are each surrounded by their respective collars 10a and are engaged by the transverse pin 20 which is of a corresponding shape. The pin 20 acts as the anchor for connecting the karabiner 1 with a retaining element 24, e.g. consisting of a flexible tape or ribbon with hooks at opposite extremities, one of which surrounds the pin 20 while the other is engaged in an auxiliary karabiner M, e.g. of conventional structure, inserted into a ring piton inserted into a rockface.

10 [0017] The pin 20 is produced from a solid or hollow cylinder and is connected in a stable way to the arms 9 either by having screw-threads and action seats 22 or by having seats 10 with different diameters and one or two external lock screws V.

15 [0018] Preferably, each collar 10a is sufficiently broad radially so that, when the pin 20 is surrounded by the retaining element 24, there is space between the outside surface of the element 24 and the outer peripheral surface of the collar itself. In this way, when the karabiner 1 is resting on a surface, the element 24 is raised with regard to the surface (i.e. not in contact with the surface) and so avoids the kind of chafing that might damage it.

20 [0019] Figs 3 and 4 show a climber S who is carrying out the operation of hooking the line C to the karabiner 1. The operation of hooking the rope C can be carried out alone by the hand which holds the rope C and without intervening directly with the opening of the karabiner 1, since the arcuate portion 5 of the karabiner 1 is always disposed perpendicularly to the surface of the rockface due to the support base of at least three points defined by the arcuate portion 5 and the forked portion 7.

25 [0020] Furthermore, the climber can insert the rope C into the karabiner from left to right or from right to left, or whatever side he pleases without worrying about avoiding certain passes of the rope C from one side or the other of the karabiner 1.

30 [0021] Naturally, the safety karabiner illustrated has been described for use in a rock climbing context, but it can be used for various other uses, e.g. for workers working on site, or in any situation where the characteristics of the invention afford an advantage.

50 Claims

1. Quick-locking safety karabiner comprising a shaped body (3) having an arcuate striker portion (5) which defines a hollow conformation (5a) for the attachment of an elongated support element such as a rope (C) or a loop element, accessible through an opening in the body (3) adjacent the arcuate portion (5) and corresponding to which is disposed a

closing element (15) which can oscillate in the general plane of the arcuate portion (5) between one position of intercepting the opening in which it engages with the arcuate portion (5) and an open position in which it is spaced from the extremity (5b), characterized in that the body (3) defines a stable base of support, on at least three points, substantially flat and transverse to the general plane of the arcuate portion (5), so that in the position of the karabiner (1) lying with its support base on a surface, the arcuate portion (5) extends perpendicularly to such a surface.

2. Karabiner according to Claim 1, characterized in that the body (3) comprises a forked portion (7) opposite the arcuate portion (5) and having a pair of diverging arms (9) onto which is articulated the closing element (15).
3. Karabiner according to Claim 2, characterized in that the body (3) is made by plastic deformation of a light alloy, high-strength aluminum in particular such as Ergal or Avional, or high-strength steel, by successive workings to produce the saddle-backed element (5a) perpendicular to the fork (7).
4. Karabiner according to Claim 2 or 3, characterized in that the closing element (15) is provided with a vertex part (15a) to engage with a hook extremity (5a) of the arcuate portion (5) and that the closing element (15) is generally tapered from its portion of articulation to the vertex part (15a).
5. Karabiner according to Claim 4, characterized in that the closing element (15) is realized by a means of a substantially V- or U-shaped steel wire, whose arms present respective transverse projections corresponding to the portion of articulation, to engage in corresponding holes (17, 17a) made in appendages (13) which extend from the free extremities (9a) of said arms (9).
6. Karabiner according to Claim 5, characterized in that said holes (17, 17a) lying on different arms of the fork (7) have parallel but staggered axes.
7. Karabiner according to any of Claims 2 to 6, characterized in that it includes a transverse pin (20) to link with a retaining element (24), such as a rope or a tape to surround it, such pin (20) engaging in a pair of corresponding circular seats (10) each defined in a respective arm (9) near its free extremity (9a) opposite the arcuate portion (5) and lying in planes approximately parallel to it.
8. Karabiner according to Claim 7, characterized in that the pin (20) is so disposed that the retaining element (24) which surrounds it is raised with

regard to said support base with the object of avoiding chafing on the retaining element (24) by a surface on which the karabiner (1) rests on its base.

9. Karabiner according to Claim 7 or 8, characterized in that the pin (20) is an approximately cylindrical element, produced similarly to the body (3) in light alloy such as Ergal or Avional or in high strength steel, able to be locked into the seats (10) by screw-threads or elements of fixture (V).
10. Karabiner according to Claims 7 to 9, characterized in that the pin (20) is realized by rolling or turning a semi-finished bar e.g. a drawn bar.

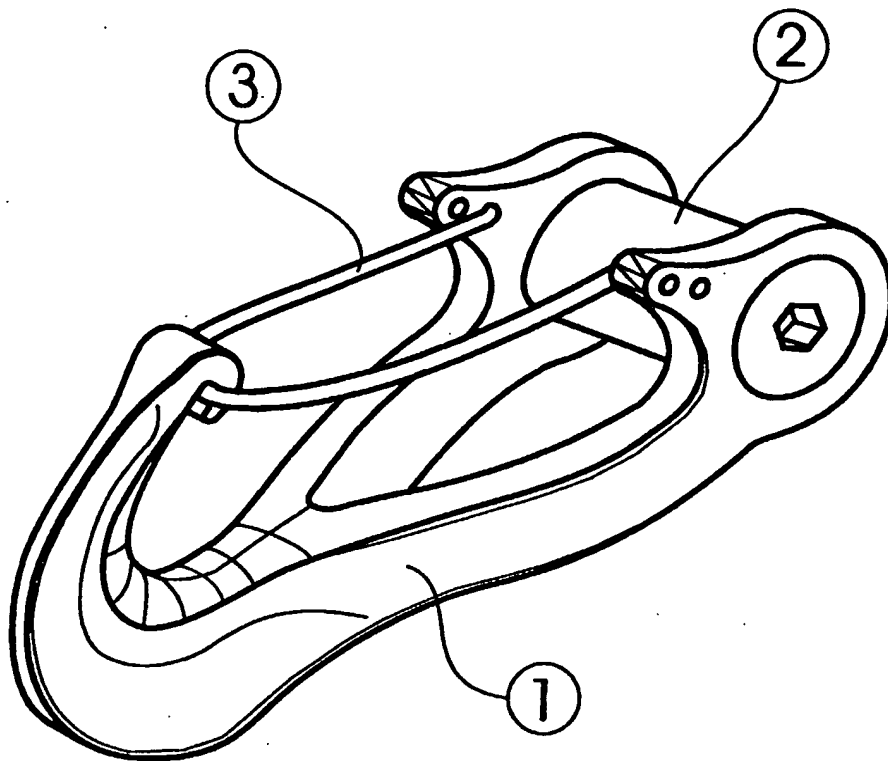


FIG. 1

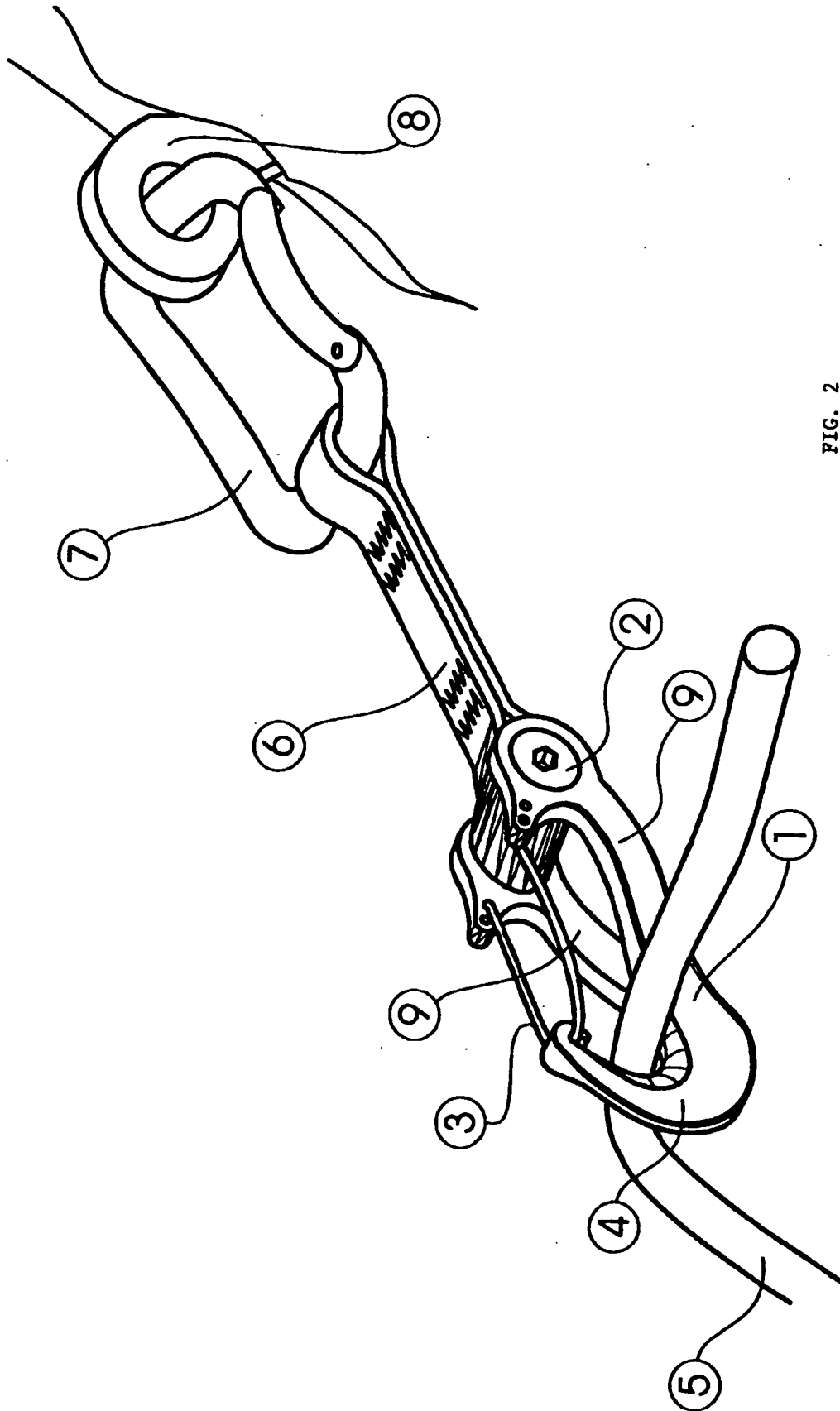


FIG. 2

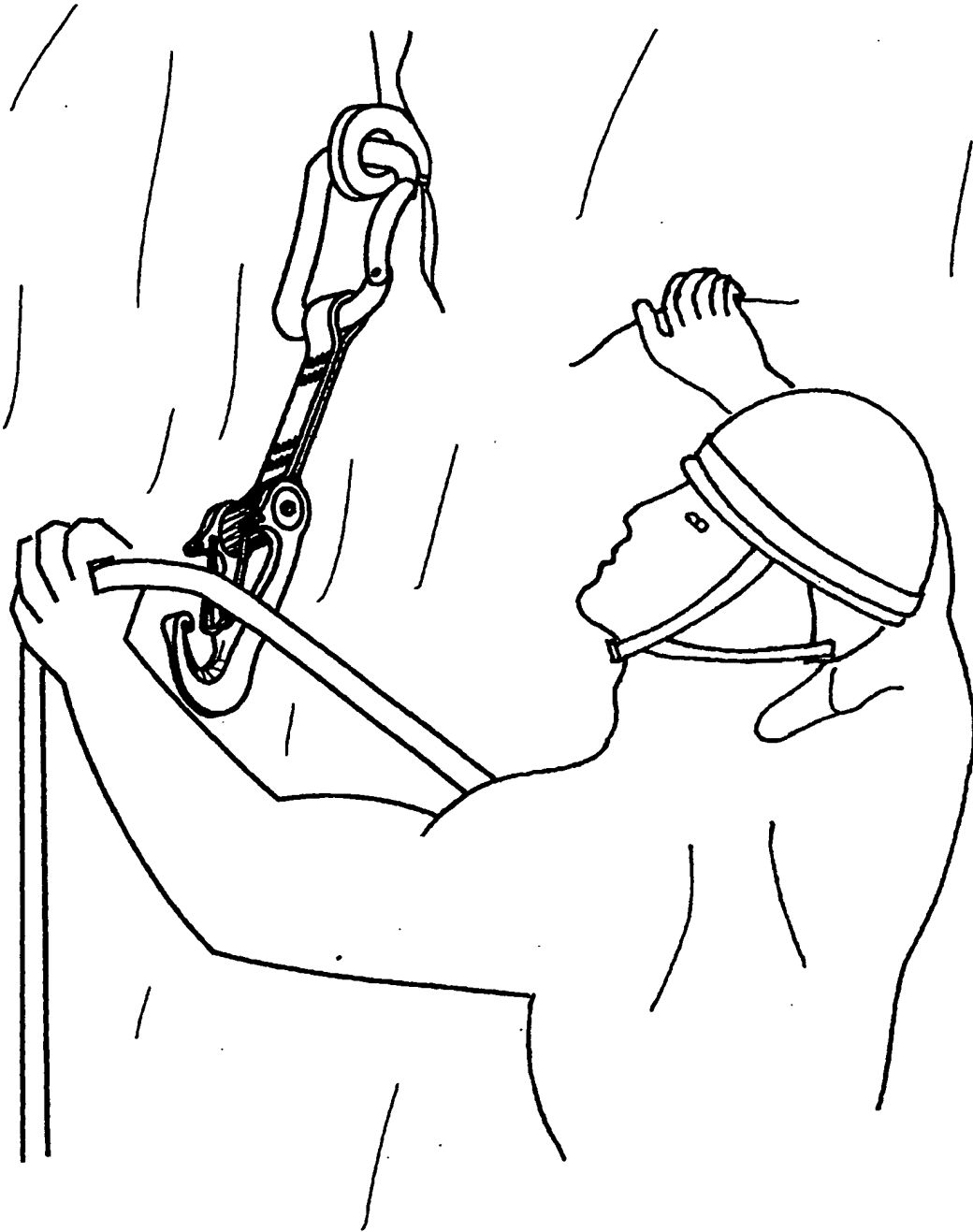
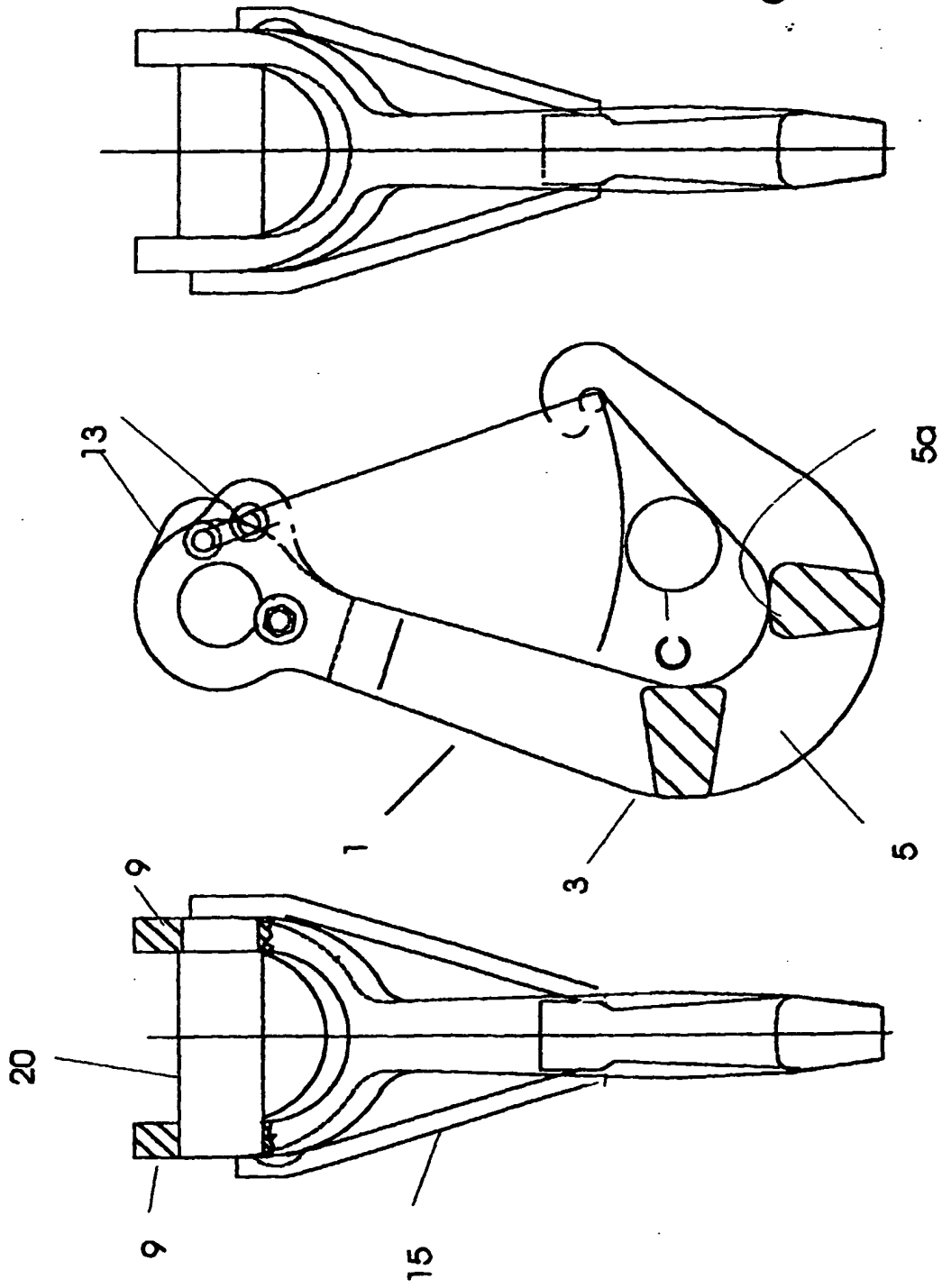


FIG. 3



FIG. 4

Fig.5





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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 00 10 4598

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
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A	* figures 1-4 *	3-10	
X	FR 2 734 E (ROBERGEL M.) 15 November 1904 (1904-11-15)	1,2	
A	* figures 1-6 *	3-10	
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A	US 4 835 823 A (CONTAT BERNARD) 6 June 1989 (1989-06-06) * column 1, line 37-44 *	3	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 13 October 2000	Examiner Huuson, C
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